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Summary of Inquiry in U-2 Case

Sen. Richard B. Russell, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Armed Services, and Rep. Carl Vinson, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, issued the following report in the Powers case yesterday:

Since his return from imprisonment by Soviet Russia, Francis Gary Powers has undergone a most intensive debriefing by CIA and other intelligence specialists, aeronautical technicians, and other experts concerned with various aspects of his mission and subsequent capture by the Soviets.

This was followed by a complete review by a board of inquiry presided over by Judge E. Barrett Prettyman to determine if Powers complied with the terms of his employment and his obligations as an American. The board has submitted its report to the Director of Central Intelligence.

Certain basic points should be kept in mind in connection with this case. The pilots involved in the U-2 program were selected on the basis of aviation proficiency, physical stamina, emotional stability, and, of course, personal security.

They were not selected or trained as espionage agents, and the whole nature of the mission was far removed from the traditional espionage scene. Their job was to fly the plane, and it was so demanding an assignment that on completion of a mission physical fatigue was a hazard on landing.

Instructions to Pilots

The pilots' contracts provided that they perform such services as might be required and follow such instructions and briefings in connection therewith as were given to them by their superiors. The guidance was as follows:

"A. If evasion is not feasible and capture appears imminent, pilots should surrender without resistance and adopt a cooperative attitude toward their captors.

"B. At all times while in the custody of their captors, pilots will conduct themselves with dignity and maintain a respectful attitude toward their superiors.

"C. Pilots will be instructed that they are perfectly free to tell the full truth about their mission with the exception of certain specifications of the aircraft. They will be advised to represent themselves as civilians, to admit previous Air Force affiliation, to admit current CIA employment, and to make no attempt to deny the nature of their mission."

Poison Needle Optional

They were instructed to be cooperative with their captors within limitations; to use their own judgment of what they should attempt to withhold, and not to subject themselves to strenuous hostile interrogation. It has been established that Mr. Powers had been briefed in accordance with this policy and so understood his guidance.

In regard to the poison needle which was prominently mentioned at the trial in Moscow, it should be emphasized that this was intended for use primarily if the pilot were subjected to torture or other circumstances which in his discretion warranted the taking of his own life.

There were no instructions that he should commit suicide and no expectation that he would do so except in those situations just described, and I emphasize that even taking the needle with him in the plane was not mandatory; it was his option.

("I" in the foregoing sentence was not identified in the text, but Committee sources said the pronoun referred to CIA Director John A. McCone.)

Mr. Powers' performance on prior missions has been reviewed, and it is clear that he was one of the outstanding pilots in the whole U-2 program. He was proficient both as a flier and as a navigator and showed himself calm in emergency situations.

His security background has been exhaustively reviewed, and any circumstances which might conceivably have led to pressure from or defection to the Russians have also been exhaustively reviewed, and no evidence has been found to

support any theory that failure of his flight might be laid to Soviet espionage activities. The same is true of the possibilities of sabotage.

Accepted Willingly

Accordingly, Mr. Powers was assigned to the mission that eventually occurred on 1 May 1960 and accepted the assignment willingly.

It was a particularly grueling assignment across the heart of Soviet Russia and ending on the northwest coast of Norway. It was necessary to maintain extreme altitude at heights at which no other plane but the U-2 had steadily flown. So far as can be ascertained, Mr. Powers followed the scheduled flight plan, making a prescribed turn to the northwest when nearing the city of Sverdlovsk, where he was directly on course.

According to his statement, he had settled on his new course and had Sverdlovsk in sight, perhaps 20 or 30 miles away, when he felt and heard something he describes as a push or feeling of acceleration on the plane accompanied by a dull noise unlike the sharp sound of a high explosive.

This caused him to look up from his instruments, and he saw surrounding him, or perhaps reflected in his canopy, he is not sure, an orange or reddish glare which seemed to persist. He felt this phenomenon to be external to the plane, but says he cannot be sure.

For a moment, the plane continued to fly normally, then it dipped to the right, but he found he was able to control this dip and level the plane with his normal controls.

Shortly thereafter, however, the plane began to nose forward, and Mr. Powers states that as he drew back on the stick he felt no control, as if the control lines had been severed. The plane nosed sharply over and went into violent maneuver, at which point he believes the wings came off.

Plane Goes Into Spin

The hull of the plane then turned completely over and he found himself in an inverted spin with the nose

high revolving around the center of the fuselage so that all he could see through the canopy looking ahead was the sky revolving around the nose of the plane. This motion exerted G forces on him, which threw him forward and up in the cockpit.

At this point he states he could have reached the destruct switches which would have set off an explosive charge in the bottom of the plane. However, he realized that this charge would go off in 70 seconds and he did not yet know if he could leave the plane.

He stated that he tried to draw himself back into the seat to see if he could activate the ejection mechanism, but the G forces prevented him from recovering his position. Being forward and out of the seat, even if he could have used the ejection mechanism, which was below and behind him, it would have seriously injured him if activated.

He recalled that it was possible to open the canopy manually, and shortly thereafter he was able to do so and the canopy disappeared. His last recollection of the altimeter was that he was at about 34,000 feet and descending rapidly.

To see if he could get out of the cockpit, he released his seat belt and was immediately thrown forward out over the cowl of the cockpit to a position where he was held only by his oxygen tube.

He tried to pull himself back in the cockpit to the destruct switches, which take four separate manipulations to set, and found himself unable to do so because of the G forces, the inflation of his pressure suit, and the fogging up of his face mask which totally obscured his view.

Parachute Opens

By pushing, he tore loose the oxygen tube and fell free, whereupon his parachute opened almost immediately, indicating that he was probably at 15,000 feet or below at this time since the automatic mechanism was set for this height.

In connection with Powers' efforts to operate the destruct switches, it should be noted that the basic weight limita-

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